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Chairperson: Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

Contents

Agenda item 109: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (*continued*)

Agenda item 114: Human rights questions (*continued*)

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (*continued*)

(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives (*continued*)

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00-73250 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 109: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (*continued*) (A/C.3/55/L.21).

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.21: Enlargement of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. **Mr. Albin** (Mexico) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.21 on behalf of the sponsors. He also paid tribute to the outgoing United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Sadako Ogata, and pledged his Government's support to the incoming High Commissioner, Mr. Ruud Lubbers, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands. As a host country with extensive experience in devising lasting humanitarian solutions to refugee issues, Mexico hoped to be elected to the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as an additional member. It was now a signatory to both the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto.

Agenda item 114: Human rights questions (*continued*)

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (*continued*) (A/C.3/55/L.34, A/C.3/55/L.36, A/C.3/55/L.37, A/C.3/55/L.39, L.40, L.41, L.44-L.46, L.53, L.54, L.57-L.59)

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.34: Human rights and cultural diversity

2. **Mr. Alaei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the sponsors, introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.34, which was based on a similar resolution adopted by consensus at the previous session. The new paragraph 2 reflected the internationally recognized linkage between the challenges of globalization and the cultural life of different peoples and nations. Inter-cultural dialogue represented an important instrument for promoting peace and partnership in the world and the universality of human rights.

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.36: Proclamation of 18 December as International Migrant's Day

3. **Ms. Monroy** (Mexico) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.36 on behalf of the original sponsors as well as Azerbaijan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Honduras and South Africa. The United States of America had withdrawn its sponsorship.

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.37: United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004, and public information activities in the field of human rights

4. **Ms. Toomey** (Australia), speaking on behalf of the sponsors, introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.37. Armenia, Botswana, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, India, Kazakhstan, Madagascar, Mali, the Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, the Philippines, the Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Solomon Islands, Swaziland, Togo and Vanuatu had joined the original sponsors.

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.39: Situation of human rights in Cambodia

5. **Mr. Ito** (Japan) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.39 on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. The text had been revised to reflect the requirements of the sponsors. In paragraph 12, the words "international standards, such as" had been deleted. To follow paragraph 18, a new paragraph had been added which read: "Takes note with interest of the signing by Cambodia of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court". In paragraph 26, before the word "prevent", the words "take all steps to" should be added. Several minor editorial changes had also been made.

6. The draft resolution was the result of fruitful consultations with the Government of Cambodia. It aimed to encourage the international community to assist the Government in improving the situation of human rights in the country, the main obstacle to progress being a lack of resources.

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.40: Promoting and consolidating democracy

7. **Mr. Dumitriu** (Romania) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.40 on behalf of the sponsors, joined by Iceland, Malta, Mongolia, South Africa and Togo. All sponsors had emphasized the value they attached to the principles and practices of democracy. Although there were differing viewpoints on the means of promoting and consolidating democracy, there was wide recognition that democracy afforded people a stake in society, and that it provided the best political and social environment for a genuine and full enjoyment of all human rights. Moreover, democracy was paramount in stable societies that strove for a better and more prosperous life. It also represented the best means of addressing the root causes of today's violent conflicts, which were predominantly internal.

8. The draft resolution reflected broad support for democracy and democratization. Democracy by its very nature was perfectible: there was always room for improving the functioning of democratic institutions and for fostering deeper respect for democratic values.

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.44: Strengthening of the rule of law

9. **Mr. Fonseca** (Brazil) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.44 on behalf of the original sponsors and Eritrea.

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.45: Respect for the right to universal freedom of travel and the vital importance of family reunification

10. **Ms. de Armas García** (Cuba) introduced and orally revised draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.45 on behalf of the original sponsors and Honduras. At the end of the second preambular paragraph, the words "as well as article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" had been added.

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.46: Human rights and scientific and technological progress

11. **Ms. Kornelíouk** (Belarus) said that her delegation wished to withdraw draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.46 from the Committee's consideration during the current session, since although a number of delegations had expressed support for the draft, further consultations were in order.

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.53: Strengthening United Nations action in the field of human rights through the promotion of international cooperation and the importance of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity

12. **Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.53 on behalf of the sponsors. Drawing attention to a typographical error, he said that Ireland had been included in the list of sponsors in place of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.41: Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance

13. **Mr. Ryan** (Ireland), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.41 on behalf of the sponsors, said that they were joined by Azerbaijan, India and Peru. In the Millennium Declaration, world leaders had called for human beings to respect each other, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language; everything possible must be done to translate that declaration into reality. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided a forceful reminder of the international community's duty with regard to freedom of religion or belief, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights further emphasized that such freedom, including the freedom to change one's religion or belief, was one of the core human rights from which no derogation could be made. Those freedoms were also specifically addressed in the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. However, despite some progress, religious persecution remained widespread.

14. The report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on religious intolerance (A/55/280 and Add.1 and 2) showed that no religion or State had a monopoly on intolerance and painted a grim picture of the scale of religious persecution and discrimination in all parts of the world. In the most severe cases, people had been tortured or summarily executed solely on account of their religion or belief, while the escalation in religiously inspired violence and the destruction of places of worship was a cause of grave concern. Women's fundamental rights continued to be violated in the name of religion. Religious minorities continued to be persecuted and the freedom of religion and belief of vulnerable groups was subject to restrictions. All Governments must ensure that the

rights of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities were fully respected.

15. It was important that Governments should cooperate with the Special Rapporteur, including by allowing in situ visits, especially in the lead-up to the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, at which discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief would be an important issue. Human rights education had a vital role in creating greater tolerance, and the holding of a conference in 2001 on school education in relation to freedom of religion and belief (A/55/280, para. 121) was a welcome initiative. The draft resolution also paid tribute to the important work of human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations in promoting greater freedom of religion or belief.

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.54: Regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights

16. **Mr. El Khadraoui** (Belgium), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.54 on behalf of the sponsors, said that they were joined by Bulgaria, Cyprus, Morocco, New Zealand, Poland and the Philippines. The importance of regional arrangements in the promotion and protection of human rights had long been recognized, most notably in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The draft resolution was largely based on the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/279) and highlighted the significant progress made in recent months. It welcomed the greater cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and regional intergovernmental organizations, particularly through its technical cooperation programme, as well as that between international and regional human rights monitoring bodies. It also welcomed the appointment of four regional advisers, as recommended at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, to encourage greater coordination and technical cooperation at the regional level, and took note of various regional initiatives undertaken recently on every continent.

17. He introduced a minor revision to paragraph 4, where "protecting the enjoyment of human rights" should read "protecting all human rights".

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.55: Human rights and extreme poverty

18. **Mr. Chuquihuara** (Peru), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.55 on behalf of the sponsors, said that they were now joined by Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Jordan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, South Africa and Thailand. The enjoyment of basic human rights was far from automatic, and poverty was one of the biggest obstacles to achieving the standards of living that would allow everyone to enjoy those rights. Despite the efforts of the international community to reduce poverty, around a billion people were living below the poverty line, were illiterate or lacked safe drinking water, and over two billion were without proper sanitation.

19. At the heart of the draft resolution was the recognition that extreme poverty inhibited the enjoyment by individuals of their human rights. Urgent international action was called for to combat the exclusion revealed in the social and economic statistics and to encourage people to achieve their development potential, which was why the draft resolution stressed the importance of international cooperation.

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.57: The right to development

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.58: Enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.59: Human rights and unilateral coercive measures

20. **Mr. Boang** (Botswana) introduced draft resolutions A/C.3/55/L.57, L.58 and L.59 on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and China and the other sponsors. Japan and New Zealand had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.57, which, in the interests of achieving consensus, was almost identical to Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/5.

21. Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.58, which was based on General Assembly resolution 54/113 and Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/70, was aimed at forging closer links between all stakeholders in the United Nations system. He introduced two revisions to the text: in the fourth preambular paragraph, "Reaffirming" was to be replaced by

"Recognizing also", and paragraph 1 was to be deleted and subsequent paragraphs renumbered.

22. Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.59 addressed the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the economic and social development of the countries affected and the obstacles they posed for the full enjoyment of human rights, particularly the right to development. It contained three notable additions to the previous year's text: the seventh preambular paragraph and paragraph 1 bis were new, and in the eighth preambular paragraph, the phrase "with all their negative implications for the social-humanitarian activities and economic and social development of developing countries" had been inserted after the words "promulgated and implemented".

(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives (*continued*) (A/C.3/55/L.38)

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.38: Situation of human rights in Myanmar

23. **Ms. Mårtensson** (Sweden), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.38 on behalf of the sponsors, said that they were now joined by Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Estonia, Greece, Iceland, Poland and the United States of America. In paragraph 10, "to implement any of the three recommendations" should be replaced by "to meet all the three recommendations".

24. The draft resolution aimed to reflect accurately the current situation in Myanmar. While the Government's cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the reopening of most university courses were welcome steps, the overall human rights situation, particularly with regard to political rights and abuses of the legal system, continued to deteriorate. Among the many human rights violations deplored in the draft resolution were extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, torture and forced labour. Moreover, despite the Government's earlier assurances, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar had still not been invited to visit the country. A time frame should be established for a dialogue leading to national reconciliation, as called for by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General.

Agenda item 109: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (*continued*)

General discussion (continued)

25. **Mr. Cordeiro** (Angola) associated his delegation with the statement made by Mozambique on behalf of the South African Development Community at the 48th meeting.

26. Angola fully supported the excellent work done by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and acknowledged the contribution of the personnel of the Office of the High Commissioner (UNHCR) who had lost their lives.

27. With over 20 per cent of its population displaced by war, and 4 per cent living in neighbouring States, Angola was well aware of the problems relating to refugees and internally displaced persons. It was grateful for the financial assistance provided by the United States and by the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, who was currently visiting the country, to enhance UNHCR programmes.

28. The Government also appreciated the assistance provided by all humanitarian and non-governmental organizations, and extended its thanks to Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia and all other countries hosting Angolan refugees.

29. The Government's commitment to providing care for those in need and relocating those deprived of the most basic needs had been demonstrated by its allocation of $55 million to humanitarian assistance programmes aimed particularly at displaced persons. Its priorities for the coming months included the continuation of life-saving operations for the most vulnerable groups; resettlement of displaced persons; development of contingency plans for areas where new displacements were expected; and preparation of rapid-impact projects aimed at restoring basic services and rural infrastructure.

30. The Government had initiated a programme to support the primary needs of Angolan refugees, based on strategies focusing on the legal aspects of the refugee situation and on the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons. It attached great importance to strengthening multilateral

assistance through partnership between all providers of humanitarian assistance.

31. Respect for international humanitarian and human rights laws was essential to ensuring the rights of refugees and displaced persons, while the safety and security of humanitarian personnel was vital to the success of humanitarian or peacekeeping operations. Angola acknowledged its primary responsibility for the safety and security of all humanitarian personnel.

32. The international community should increase assistance for refugees and displaced persons, supporting programmes aimed at alleviating poverty among them and enhancing coordination under the leadership of the Governments of affected countries, including through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

33. **Mr. Regmi** (Nepal) paid tribute to the outgoing High Commissioner and her staff for their dedication and commitment to resolving the problems of refugees and displaced persons worldwide. He also congratulated the High Commissioner's successor on his appointment.

34. The High Commissioner's report (A/55/12) provided a distressing overview of the plight of refugees. Their numbers had grown, leaving no region of the world unaffected. The victims were mostly children and women, forced to flee from persecution, armed conflict, natural disasters or human rights violations.

35. Throughout its history, UNHCR had successfully alleviated refugees' sufferings through a strategy of prevention, preparedness and provision of practical solutions. The Office should enhance its strategy by targeting regions where the situation remained unstable. However, no lasting solutions to refugee problems would be found without addressing the root causes in a timely manner.

36. His delegation welcomed the priority attention given by UNHCR to the special needs of refugee women and children and to the environmental impact of a refugee presence (ibid., paras. 102-112). It was deeply concerned by UNHCR's discouraging financial situation, since the Office could not fulfil its mandate without adequate and sustained financial support. All donor countries, particularly in the developed world, should increase their contributions and honour their pledges in order to enable the Office to discharge its responsibilities for saving lives.

37. Nepal was grateful for UNHCR's assistance with the 100,000 Bhutanese refugees it was hosting and appealed to the international community to maintain current levels of assistance, as a basic minimum. In keeping with its belief in the right of refugees to return safely and with dignity to their country, the Government was working to resolve the refugee problem through bilateral negotiations with the Bhutanese Government. It hoped that the latter would show greater willingness to find an early solution.

38. The presence of large refugee populations in least developed countries aggravated existing economic, social and environmental problems. Such countries needed international help and support in order to avoid further impoverishment and chaos.

39. **Mrs. Mohanta** (India) said that the High Commissioner would be remembered for her inspiring leadership and tireless work in the face of daunting challenges. Her vision would continue to inspire UNHCR and all humanitarian actors. India also congratulated her successor on his appointment.

40. There was no substitute for a concerted international response to the increasingly complex global refugee situation. The principle of international solidarity and burden sharing was well established, but frequently ignored by rich countries. The quality of asylum had deteriorated, with refugees sometimes facing border closures, interdiction at sea, expulsion, premature return to an unsafe environment and prolonged detention by countries with the means to offer them both asylum and protection. While societies had a natural inclination to protect their own prosperity, restrictive practices had a detrimental impact on world public opinion regarding refugee protection.

41. The needs of developing countries, which were most affected by refugee problems, should be placed at the top of the refugee agenda. The economic and social impact of hosting large refugee populations should be systematically assessed and addressed through global cooperation, lest the willingness to accept refugees declined.

42. India noted with concern, as reflected in the High Commissioner's report (paras. 119-124), that UNHCR was chronically under-funded and that funding

shortfalls had risen. It was regrettable that the resulting expenditure cuts had affected priority areas such as women and children. Long-term planning was not possible without reliable funding. Moreover, the tendency of donors to focus on a few refugee situations at the expense of others, notably in Africa, was particularly worrying. Donor countries should provide reliable funding and allow the Office to determine the priorities for its use.

43. Scant attention had been paid to abject poverty as a cause for refugee outflows. Poverty and degrading conditions often brought out the worst in human beings, giving rise to conflicts that blurred their root causes. Large refugee outflows were the result of such conflicts or of a natural desire to find better opportunities. Rather than focusing on repatriation, the international community would do better to elaborate a preventive strategy aimed at addressing poverty and investing in development as the most cost-effective approach.

44. To see solutions to refugee questions through the prism of accession to relevant international instruments was to take a narrow view. Although India had not acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its commitment to humanitarianism was second to none. India hosted a large number of refugees and provided support through programmes financed entirely from its own resources. It had consistently demonstrated its commitment to the principles of protection and non-refoulement. With regard to the proposed global consultations on international protection, it hoped that they would take a practical rather than narrowly legalistic approach.

45. States needed to do more to ensure the safety and security of refugees and of UNHCR personnel. Assistance could be offered to enhance the capacity of States to guarantee security, but attempts to impose solutions would be counterproductive.

46. While States bore the primary responsibility for protecting and assisting internally displaced persons, international action should ensure respect for the concept of sovereignty. Any action should be taken only at the request of the country concerned.

47. **Mr. Widodo** (Indonesia) extended his delegation's appreciation to the High Commissioner for her many accomplishments during her tenure, and congratulated her successor, to whom it would offer its full cooperation.

48. Indonesia was currently experiencing its own problems after thousands of refugees and displaced persons had fled East Timor in 1999. The prolonged presence of refugee camps along a State's borders created problems of a humanitarian, national and international nature, requiring the concerted efforts of all parties concerned in order to find a comprehensive solution. Recognizing the need for fresh momentum to resolve the refugee issue, Indonesia had adopted a comprehensive plan of action in collaboration with UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration. Registration of the remaining refugees was one of the main tasks. As indicated in the High Commissioner's report (para. 69), over 150,000 persons had returned to East Timor, a process in which Indonesia had played an important role.

49. Despite the progress made, a number of difficulties had been encountered. The Government of Indonesia strongly condemned the killing of UNHCR staff members in Atambua, West Timor, and the attack on the UNHCR office on 6 September 2000. The President had written to the Secretary-General to express his condemnation of the violence and provide assurances of his determination to conduct a full-scale investigation. A number of arrests had already been made.

50. Indonesia remained in constant contact with the United Nations on all matters relating to the deaths of the UNHCR personnel and the safety of the remaining refugees. Two battalions had been sent to the area to reinforce law and order, while the Government had addressed many of the concerns raised by UNHCR and had extended its cooperation to the Organization.

51. Indonesia had also invited members of the Security Council to visit Atambua later in November to witness progress achieved in restoring security to the area and preparations for the registration of refugees. However, such a visit was not intended to meet the conditions laid down by UNHCR for the refugees' return, since the agency was responsible for the refugees in West Timor. It was most regrettable that UNHCR had withdrawn its personnel from the area.

52. As humanitarian needs and suffering continued in many parts of the world, UNHCR had discovered that lasting solutions took time, effort and sustained international engagement. Any effort to resolve refugee questions should also involve the country concerned,

so that the particularities of each situation could be taken into account.

53. Indonesia was committed to assuring the safety and security of humanitarian workers. However, all international organizations, including UNHCR, had a duty to care for their own staff. Governments and all other actors should protect humanitarian workers, while the individuals concerned should respect national laws and customs.

54. The Indonesian Government spared no effort to provide food and shelter to the refugees in West Timor and would continue to fulfil its moral and legal obligations towards them. However, it was imperative that the root causes of the problem were addressed. That should go beyond appeals for the disarming and disbanding of militia to include calls on the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) to implement stability and development programmes that would facilitate voluntary repatriation.

55. States had primary responsibility for protecting the rights of refugees within their territory and Indonesia was working to fulfil its obligations to provide relief to those in need. It hoped to continue its long history of contributing to the strengthening of UNHCR and of according refugees the right to asylum. Its commitment to resolving emerging issues remained unchanged.

56. **Mrs. Nicodemos** (Brazil) paid tribute to the High Commissioner for having earned the respect of Member States, non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian actors in discharging her duties with great competence and a sense of responsibility. She had faced difficult challenges with both courage and compassion, drawing also on the dedication of UNHCR officials. By ensuring respect for the basic tenets of refugee and international humanitarian law, UNHCR was not only fulfilling its mandate but also helping to build peace and stability.

57. It was becoming increasingly difficult to provide humanitarian assistance, as illustrated by the recent murder of UNHCR personnel. The international community should do its utmost to prevent the recurrence of such shameful acts, while Governments should protect humanitarian personnel working under their jurisdiction. For its part, Brazil was committed to strengthening international cooperation aimed at protecting United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers. Accordingly, it had ratified the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

58. Lack of resources posed a major problem when dealing with refugees and internally displaced persons. Entire regions and countries plagued by humanitarian crises did not receive the attention they deserved. The root cause was lack of political will. UNHCR had done a great deal to help those in need, particularly those away from the limelight of international attention, and Member States had a duty to provide it with the political and material support it required.

59. It was disturbing that refugees and asylum-seekers were increasingly targeted in armed conflicts, or made scapegoats in other situations. The international community had an urgent duty to uphold the institution of asylum and the principle of non-refoulement, which constituted the foundations of international protection for refugees. Xenophobic and racist attacks and discrimination against refugees should be strongly condemned and those responsible brought to justice.

60. Brazil's National Commission for Refugees (CONARE) had strengthened its cooperation with UNHCR. Partnerships with civil society helped meet the basic needs of refugees, and measures had been taken to facilitate their access to the labour market, social security and public health. A technical cooperation agreement had been signed with UNHCR in 2000 to improve Brazil's organizations and bodies providing assistance, to raise awareness of refugees' plight and to stimulate interest in the subject among academics.

61. Brazil fully subscribed to the main international instruments for the protection of refugees and had expanded its interpretation of those instruments to include the situation of individuals fleeing from serious human rights violations as a reason for granting refugee status. During its current presidency of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), it had initiated negotiations on a protocol aimed at harmonizing the relevant legislation of member and associated countries.

62. The provision of adequate resources for humanitarian assistance should be given urgent priority. The idea that developing countries were only recipients of aid was a myth. Many such countries bore the brunt of assisting refugees from neighbouring

States and should be rewarded by the international community for their generosity.

63. The fate of millions depended on international political will. The international community should honour its commitments so that refugees would be given hope and be able to enjoy their human rights.

64. **Mr. Alemán** (Ecuador) expressed concern at the worsening of the conflict in Colombia, which had driven refugees across the border into Ecuador, and he therefore welcomed the establishment of a UNHCR liaison office in Ecuador and expressed support for UNHCR's efforts undertaken in coordination with civil society partners. His Government would continue to encourage such actions and he called for the support of the international community in developing response capabilities for such emergency situations.

65. He expressed grave concern at the case of an Ecuadorian banker, a fugitive from justice, who had been arrested in Lebanon and was to be extradited to Ecuador, but who had been able to escape justice when the UNHCR representative in Lebanon had declared him a political refugee. Although UNHCR had recognized that official's error, the extradition process had been interrupted and Ecuador's relationship with UNHCR and those countries which had intervened to prevent extradition had been previously damaged. The official responsible for that error should be severely sanctioned.

66. The year 2001 would mark the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. He paid tribute to all those who worked to protect the rights of refugees and expressed support for the proposal by South Africa that 20 June of every year should be declared "World Refugee Day" as part of efforts to increase awareness and find lasting solutions to the refugee problem. His Government also supported UNHCR's consultations with Governments on ways to revitalize the international refugee protection regime.

67. **Mr. Cong** Jun (China) said that ethnic, religious and territorial disputes continued to threaten international peace and security and to create large numbers of refugees. Three quarters of those refugees were concentrated in the developing countries, causing grave social, political, economic and environmental disruption while developed countries, in violation of internationally recognized principles, had been implementing increasingly restrictive asylum policies. Furthermore, the worsening of regional conflicts had gravely threatened the security of refugee camps as well as humanitarian workers.

68. For 50 years the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol had served as the legal basis for refugee protection. New problems had arisen, however, such as internally displaced persons, large outflows of populations, growing numbers of economic migrants and the abuse of asylum procedures. He therefore expressed satisfaction that UNHCR was undertaking global negotiations in the context of the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the Convention with a view to making the refugee protection system more effective and dynamic. UNHCR must continue to play a central role, and negotiations should aim at ensuring that UNHCR and countries of asylum received sufficient resources to meet the needs of refugees, so that the developing countries in particular could reduce their economic and social burdens and facilitate long-term development while paving the way for ultimate settlement of the refugee problem.

69. In order to eliminate the root causes of the refugee problem, countries must respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and abide by the principles of non-aggression, non-interference, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence, instruct strict adherence to the Charter of the United Nations and relevant international norms, as well as promote economic and social development. Countries of origin, asylum and settlement as well as donor countries could resolve the refugee problem by respecting the principles of international solidarity and burden sharing.

70. Despite its own economic constraints, China had provided asylum and protection for 280,000 refugees and had maintained a good relationship with UNHCR, whose revolving fund in China had been functioning well. His Government would continue to cooperate closely with UNHCR and would strengthen its cooperation with the international community and concerned parties with a view to contributing to the resolution of the refugee problem.

71. **Mr. Weiss** (Austria) recalled that it had been the massive exodus of some 200,000 refugees from Hungary into Austria in 1956 that had been UNHCR's first major emergency as well as the first example of partnership with other key actors like the International

Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Austrian Red Cross and other voluntary agencies. Since that time, nearly 1 million persons had received refuge on Austrian soil, and refugees and their descendants made up about 10 per cent of the Austrian population. That commitment as a host country had continued uninterrupted through many crises until the present day and would continue in the years to come.

72. Speaking on behalf of the Austrian Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), he noted that OSCE had evolved from a standard-setting forum into a full-fledged operational institution with 70 per cent of its budget going to field activities. The increasing operational cooperation between OSCE and the United Nations system represented an outstanding example of implementation of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

73. One of Austria's priorities had been to develop comprehensive approaches to migration management, and the Platform for Cooperative Security had been adopted as an Annex to the Istanbul Charter for European Security with a view to promoting a culture of cooperation among many actors, including UNHCR, as in the case of Kosovo. Interdisciplinary cooperation had also been reinforced by expanding cooperation at Headquarters level with UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration and the Council of Europe in the context of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Conference process to include field operations and representatives of other relevant international organizations. With regard to the Chechen conflict, a regular information and consultation network between OSCE and international partners on the humanitarian and human rights situation in the northern Caucasus had been created. Humanitarian aid in that region was an absolute priority, and the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya, together with non-governmental organizations, was implementing humanitarian projects which in an initial phase were concentrating on children and youth. OSCE would continue to reinforce such cooperation with UNHCR.

74. **Mr. Sangaré** (Mali) said that more than ever before it was essential that the international community should develop effective strategies to deal with the problems posed by refugees, displaced persons, returnees and victims of natural disasters. The root causes of armed conflicts such as economic recession, poverty, lack of democracy, ethnic prejudice and religious intolerance must be addressed through the promotion of a culture of peace, democracy and dialogue between civilizations. Peace must be consolidated in post-conflict periods and those guilty of crimes must be punished. Early warning systems for natural disasters must also be developed, and he noted that some 90 per cent of the victims lived in developing countries, where poverty and population pressure exposed the population to natural risks which could rapidly develop into disaster situations.

75. The money spent on wars and intervention and rescue activities would be better spent in the cause of sustainable and equitable development. To that end, West Africa had established the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a peacekeeping and conflict-prevention, -resolution and -management mechanism, which had in turn created the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which could be an example for the creation of a similar African force. He also supported the creation of a "council of wise men" drawn from across Africa to promote cooperation. Those measures had been one result of increased integration in West Africa. In that context, he noted the financial assistance provided by the European Union through its European Development Fund (EDF) to the regional integration efforts, and urged the European Union to take into account the conclusions of the Bamako meeting of the EDF national coordinators.

76. Africa had the largest number of conflicts, refugees and repatriated and displaced persons but received far less assistance than other regions of the world. He therefore called on the international community to provide greater support for the plan adopted by the joint Organization of African Unity (OAU)/UNHCR special meeting of technical experts held in Conakry in March 2000, and for the implementation of the conclusions of the sixth OAU/International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) seminar on international humanitarian law held in Addis Ababa in May 2000.

77. Humanitarian assistance must be provided wherever needed, in a spirit of international cooperation. States must honour their commitments under international humanitarian law, and develop national mechanisms to punish violations. He paid tribute to the efforts of ICRC and called on West African States to take into account the results of the meeting of the West Africa ICRC advisory committees

held in Bamako in March 2000. Consultations must also be undertaken within the United Nations to better define the notion of humanitarian intervention and coordinate it with peacekeeping operations. In that context, he expressed support for the Brahimi report on United Nations peace operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809) and stressed the need to develop new standards for United Nations humanitarian intervention.

78. He welcomed the outcome of a seminar on humanitarian intervention organized in May 2000 by the Government of the Netherlands and said that his Government was studying what contribution it could make, within the limits of its resources, to international humanitarian efforts. The final objective must be the creation of a new, dynamic and effective international humanitarian order under United Nations auspices, dedicated to continued improvement in the quality of life of the peoples of the world.

79. **Mr. Thomson** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) expressed concern at the increase in the numbers of refugees and displaced persons and the prospect of further increases as a result of continued massive humanitarian crises. Unfortunately, the attention of the international community did not remain focused on crises long enough to ensure that assistance flows reached the most vulnerable, particularly crises in Africa and crises which did not have a high media profile. That had led to a disturbing increase in the conditionality of funding and its direction towards groups which were not always the most seriously affected.

80. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were uniquely equipped to help identify the most crucial needs by virtue of its member societies' contacts with Governments, non-governmental organizations and decision takers, on a basis of humanity, impartiality and neutrality. The Federation was UNHCR's largest single partner, working with it in numerous countries, including all countries of asylum. The growth in the number of crises and changes in attitude towards asylum seekers had increased the need for the Federation and UNHCR to work more closely together and better involve national societies in that cooperation. The Federation had also cooperated with UNHCR and non-governmental organizations in developing a refugee-protection training programme under the UNHCR "reach out" initiative.

81. The Red Cross Red Crescent worked with vulnerable individuals and groups irrespective of their status as refugees or displaced persons, and its societies, working within the law of their countries, took an active interest in the plight of internally displaced persons, a crisis of far greater proportions than that of refugees. The Federation had contributed to a number of initiatives during the past year. It was, however, concerned that actions under the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement had largely been restricted to war related displacement, and he stressed that comparable hardship and displacement were caused by natural disasters as well as the actions of certain Governments which forcibly displaced their people in order to make way for agricultural or development projects adding to strains on both the incoming and resident populations. It was precisely those situations which tended to escape media attention, and he stressed that the Federation would continue to work for a more coherent and comprehensive approach to the needs of the internally displaced.

82. The Federation's national societies also concerned themselves with the welfare and needs of migrants. Whether a person was classified as a migrant or a refugee, however, often owed more to policies in the receiving State than to the person's real circumstances. That policy confusion in some States, as well as at the international level, could have serious effects on the persons concerned. In addition, Governments in many developed countries were trying to restrict immigration while seeking to recruit talented people to fill gaps in their country's own economic "mix"; restrictions had led to a sharp rise in criminality and people-smuggling, while the search for talent had caused developing countries to lose some of their most promising individuals. National societies were often active at the heart of that conundrum, for it produced problems of vulnerability in both the countries of emigration and the countries of immigration.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.